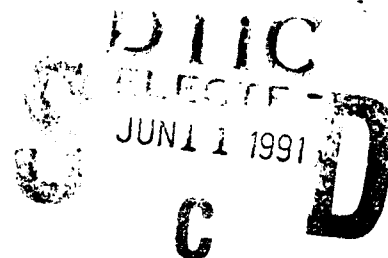


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Newport, R.I.

**POWER PROJECTION STRATEGY: New
Directions for Forward Defense**

by

Christopher J. Krisinger

Major, USAF

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College, the Department of the Navy or the Department of the Air Force.

Signature: CD Krisinger

11 February 1991

Paper directed by
Theodore L. Gatchel, Colonel, USMC
Chairman, Department of Operations



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A new, well-coordinated, and credible policy for forward defense in the post-Cold War environment is an imperative for future national security planners.

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Abstract of

POWER PROJECTION STRATEGY: New Directions for Forward Defense

The future of forward defense and the extensive overseas network of bases, as a component of U.S. power projection strategy, are considered in light of a changing international strategic environment. The assertion is made that several factors--among them global political change and domestic fiscal trends--are creating a vulnerability in national security strategy by causing a retreat from forward defense while limiting improvements to strategic mobility assets. The case is argued that forward defense is a vital component of national security strategy and should remain so. The advantages of U.S. forward defense strategy are examined from historical, geopolitical, and contemporary operational perspectives. The proposed "new directions" acknowledge that retrenchment and change are likely in the post-Cold War world, yet strategy formulation should not be driven strictly by external forces. Key concepts for the revised policy include: the defense of interests, guarantees of access, and "local partners." A specific recommendation for the DOD outlines the need for regional information centers to further support the reduced foreign access envisioned in the post-Cold War climate. A new, well-coordinated, and credible policy for forward defense in the post-Cold War environment is an imperative for future national security planners.

PREFACE

Of the two components that comprise the U.S. ability to globally project power--strategically mobile forces and forward defense--there is an abundance of literature about the first. Numerous studies, analyses, articles, and editorials are available on a wide ranging variety of systems, equipment, and hardware, along with guidance for their employment. Conversely, relatively little is written about the U.S. strategy of forward defense and the extensive system of bases the U.S. maintains around the world to make it credible. This is peculiarly interesting considering the size of the investment, the costs--both tangible and intangible--associated with maintenance, and the implications for national security policy.

This paper will focus on the issues and options of forward defense as an element of power projection, while not engaging in discussion of possible choices for mobility forces and their employment. These points are presented apart from their mobility counterparts for clarity of explanation and analysis. In reality, a mix of these options should be used to formulate power projection strategy to account for the complexities of the strategic environment.

A clarification of two definitions is also required. The term power projection conveys the strategy and the ability of the United States to intervene with military force outside its borders, as opposed to the Navy's narrower use of the term in strike warfare. Similarly, forward defense primarily relates to

the extensive network of overseas military bases maintained by the U.S. vice the less broad NATO concept of positioning forces nearer the front line.

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POWER PROJECTION STRATEGY: New Directions for Forward Defense

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The interests of the United States are global and rely on a viable national security strategy for support. National security strategy is credible when it is strengthened by sufficient military capability to back words with action.

Historically, the United States has sought--and indeed, enjoyed--freedom of action in international matters. A keystone of the national military strategy allowing that freedom is the ability to globally project power. Projection of conventional military power is traditionally associated with the interrelated concepts of forward defense and strategic mobility.

Recently, both global change and domestic fiscal trends portend a fundamental shift in U.S. strategy away from previous reliance on forward defense, while substantive improvements to strategic mobility capability have not yet materialized. The rapidity of world events and possible fiscal problems could propel the nation through a critical window of time whereby forward defense is irreparably abandoned and strategic mobility capability is seriously constrained. The possible resulting gap between the ability to project power and world-oriented policy could place America's global interests "in harm's way."

While adjustments to a changing international environment are necessary, a power projection strategy for the future must retain a modified, yet credible version of the present forward

defense strategy. A careful evaluation of U.S. security requirements resulting in a comprehensive policy for forward defense and the network of bases is necessary for the future.

The next chapter lays out the breadth of U.S. overseas commitments and the strategy of power projection developed and matured to defend and preserve those interests. Chapter III examines the potential strategy/policy mismatch caused by the mounting pressures--both domestic and international--to reduce commitment of U.S. forces overseas and constrict the fielding of enhanced mobility forces. Chapter IV outlines the rationale for why the U.S. has relied heavily on forward defense from historical, geopolitical, operational, and other perspectives. Chapter V revisits several older, yet timely, ideas, details several new innovative concepts, and links both to the future of forward defense. Conclusions comprise the final chapter and propose that a revised, coordinated, and well-organized policy is necessary for the U.S. forward defense strategy to adjust to the changing international and domestic environments.

CHAPTER II

GLOBAL INTERESTS DEMAND CREDIBLE POWER PROJECTION

I find it unhappily necessary to report that the future and the safety of our country are over-whelmingly involved in events far beyond our borders.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944

We are a nation with global responsibilities.

President Ronald Reagan
November 1983

Global Nature of U.S. National Interests. The globalist messages of these two Presidents reflect an enduring theme that has guided U.S. national security strategy since the final days of the Second World War. The statements emphasize the extent to which the destiny of the United States depends on conditions beyond our shores.

The global aspect of America's national interests can be seen from several views. The primary view is one of core interests that are fundamental to preserving the U.S. as a free and independant nation with fundamental institutions and values intact--the protection of which is the aim of our national security policies and posture. Former Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci in his FY 1990 Report to the Congress explained the global nature of these core interests:

We see an expanding global prosperity as enhancing our own. With the growing interdependence of nations, America no longer has the luxury of political, economic, or military isolationism. The entire world is our ecological home, our marketplace, and so our security posture must remain global as well.¹

Additionally, America's national interests are unique from other nations in two ways. First, among the world's military

powers, including the Soviet Union, the U.S. has extensive and binding military obligations beyond its own continent, yet faces no military threats to its homeland warranting retention of large military forces on its own territory. The same oceans that for over a century shielded the U.S. from external attack are today barriers to be surmounted in order to fulfill overseas military commitments as a world power. For the U.S. military, getting to the scene of action is in most cases as much a concern as fighting once there.

The other view transcends core national interests and assigns to the U.S. a globalist mission based on our standing in the international community. President Bush describes this "mission" in the 1990 edition of the National Security Strategy of the United States:

As the world's most powerful democracy, we are inescapably the leader, the connecting link in a global alliance of democracies. The pivotal responsibility for ensuring the stability of the international balance remains ours, even as its requirements change in a new era. As the world enters a period of new hope for peace, it would be foolhardy to neglect the basic conditions of security that are bringing it about."²

Many foreign leaders also share similar views of the United States as a nation with a mission and welcome the involvement of the U.S. in world affairs beyond the preservation of its fundamental interests. "America is the most vital nation in the West and will remain so," says Helmut Schmidt, the former West German chancellor.³

Traditional Power Projection Strategy. Because our interests are inextricably worldwide, it is axiomatic that protecting them demands an ability to employ power worldwide.

Given America's geostrategical position, it is obvious that such a strategy must feature the capacity to intervene across vast oceanic distances. Military capability will also be ineffectual unless it features the all-important attribute of timeliness. Historical experience suggests that the sooner the sanction of military power can be invoked, the greater the probability of deterrence or operational success. These critical factors are the sine qua non for a U.S. global power projection strategy traditionally comprised of two elements: strategically mobile forces and an extensive network of forward bases. The two complimentary concepts are more commonly known as strategic mobility and forward defense.

Power projection has, in this century at least, been almost the prime raison d'etre for American military forces. Neither our shores nor our borders were threatened, while during the same period we assumed the leadership of the Western world. Thus, the U.S. learned the ability to project military power is an essential element of effectiveness in that role.

To be sure, any workable U.S. strategy must take into account the political realities of the current international and domestic climate. This understanding accounts for the complementary roles of the two components of power projection strategy. For example: despite the acknowledged need for mobility assets to meet extensive overseas obligations, the United States has never, in peacetime or in wartime, maintained the lift capability to meet its lift requirements. Forward bases thus ease the shortfall. Conversely, the unpredictability of access, overflight rights, and maritime transit rights in the

international arena can render the most carefully crafted contingency plans impracticable. In that case, the value of mobility may compensate for lost access.

Sketch of U.S. Forward Base Network. In support of national interests, the U.S. strategy of power projection with its forward defense component maintains deployed forces in regions of strategic importance. While several other nations, most notably Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, maintain overseas bases, the U.S. has the largest overseas basing network. The U.S. also maintains a mix of projection forces deployable and supportable from both the U.S. and overseas, in defense of itself and its allies.⁴

The virtually worldwide network includes 375 installations in 35 foreign countries. (Figure 1) In all, nearly one million U.S. citizens, including about 458,000 military personnel and 425,000 civilian Defense Department employees and dependent family members are stationed abroad.⁵ U.S. personnel overseas are primarily based in West Germany (224 installations), Korea (41), Japan (31), and Great Britain, while significant numbers are also based in the Philippines, Italy, Panama, and Spain.⁶ Smaller bases exist in other key locations. (Figure 2)

The costs associated with this overseas base network are substantial. If only U.S. overseas bases and forces stationed at those bases in peacetime are factored, costs approach \$90 billion a year. Other costs associated with U.S. bases include de facto rent payments the U.S. makes to many nations in exchange for base rights. These amounted to about \$1.4 billion in FY88, and are likely to rise in the future.⁷

AMERICA'S GLOBAL MILITARY BASING NETWORK

U.S. TERRITORIES AND SPECIAL LOCATIONS

	Major Bases	US Military Personnel	Comments/Major Activities
Guam	10	8,519	Fleet support; B-52s; anti-submarine sound surveillance (SOSUS) station; nuclear weapons.
Johnston Atoll	1	136	Communications station; chemical weapons storage.
Midway Island	1	13	SOSUS station; P-3 anti-submarine warfare (ASW) planes; electronic support for missile tests.
Puerto Rico	6	3,361	General fleet support; sea area training range; P-3 ASW planes; main base: Roosevelt Roads.
Marshall Islands	1	42	Kwajalein test range for ABM, ASAT systems; ICBM, SLBM test target area.
Virgin Islands	-	13	Electronic support for naval weapons training; ASW training range.
Wake Island	1	7	Weather station.

FOREIGN AREAS

Antarctica	-	141	Transport and logistics support for scientists in Antarctic Research Program.
Antigua	1	70	Oceanographic research; electronic support for U.S. space and missile testing.
Ascension	-	2	Electronic support for space and missile testing; satellite ground station.
Australia	2	753	Satellite, naval communications, intelligence and nuclear test detection stations.
Bahamas	-	59	Submarine testing and training; electronic support for missile testing.
Bahrain	-	153	Administrative and logistical support for Navy's Middle East Force.
Bermuda	3	1,844	SOSUS and naval communication stations; P-3 ASW planes; space tracking radar.
Belgium	2	3,317	Logistics, air transport for NATO HQ; communications terminal; nuclear weapons storage.
Britain	19	28,497	Ballistic missile submarine support; 300 combat aircraft; nuclear weapons storage.
Canada	1	533	SOSUS station (Argentia); numerous bomber and ballistic missile early warning radars.
Cuba	1	2,337	Gunnery and ASW training ranges; minor repair and maintenance facilities.
Diego Garcia	1	1,001	Indian Ocean fleet support; prepositioned supply ships for possible Persian Gulf war.
Egypt	-	1,468	Medical research unit; hundreds of advisors; large joint exercises every year.
Germany, West	224	249,411	Major U.S. Army deployment; thousands of tanks, hundreds of aircraft; nuclear weapons.
Greenland	2	202	Ballistic missile early warning (EW) radar (Thule); bomber EW radars.
Greece	4	3,284	Fleet support (Souda Bay); communications station; Hellenikon air base; nuclear weapons.
Honduras	-	1,573	Airfield; fuel storage; intelligence facilities; main base: Palmerola.
Iceland	1	3,234	SOSUS station; P-3 ASW planes; fighter air defense squadron; main base: Keflavik.
Italy	10	14,829	Fleet support; P-3 ASW planes; nuclear weapons storage.
Japan	31	49,680	Fleet support, repair (Yokosuka); naval logistics (Sasebo); Marine Division (Okinawa).
Kenya*	-	31	U.S. spent \$58 million to upgrade ports and airfields; peacetime refueling (Mombasa).
Korea, South	41	45,501	Second Infantry Division and 170 combat aircraft; nuclear weapons storage.
Morocco*	-	48	U.S. has spent \$59 million to upgrade airfield and fuel storage facilities.
Netherlands	2	2,872	F-15 fighter wing (Soesterberg); nuclear weapons storage.
New Zealand	-	59	Black Birch Astronomic Observatory; staging area for Antarctic operations.
Norway	-	1,674	Intelligence gathering facilities; prepositioned equipment for Marine Brigade (Trondheim).
Oman*	-	27	U.S. spent \$256 million to improve airfields, ports; \$121 million for prepositioned equipment.
Panama	5	11,100	Army fortifications; jungle training area; communications station; naval logistics.
Philippines	11	16,655	Fleet support, repair, ammunition, fuel storage (Subic Bay); fighter wing (Clark air base).
Portugal	1	1,664	P-3 ASW planes, refueling for trans-Atlantic flights (Lajes Air Base, Azores).
Saudi Arabia	-	421	U.S. Airborne Warning And Control System (AWACS) aircraft operate from Saudi airfield.
Seychelles	-	4	Air Force satellite tracking, control, and communications station.
Somalia*	-	53	U.S. spent \$54 million to upgrade ports and airfields (Mogadishu and Berbera).
Spain	6	8,724	Fleet support (Rota); P-3 ASW planes; F-16 fighter Wing (to be relocated to Italy).
Turkey	7	5,034	Intelligence station to monitor Soviet Navy and missile testing; radars; nuclear weapons.

* These countries do not allow the permanent stationing of U.S. military personnel in peacetime. But the U.S. has financed the improvement of facilities and has been granted special access rights for certain military purposes.

Figure 1. America's Global Military Basing Network

Source: "The Global Network of United States Military Bases." The Defense Monitor, vol. XVIII, no. 2.

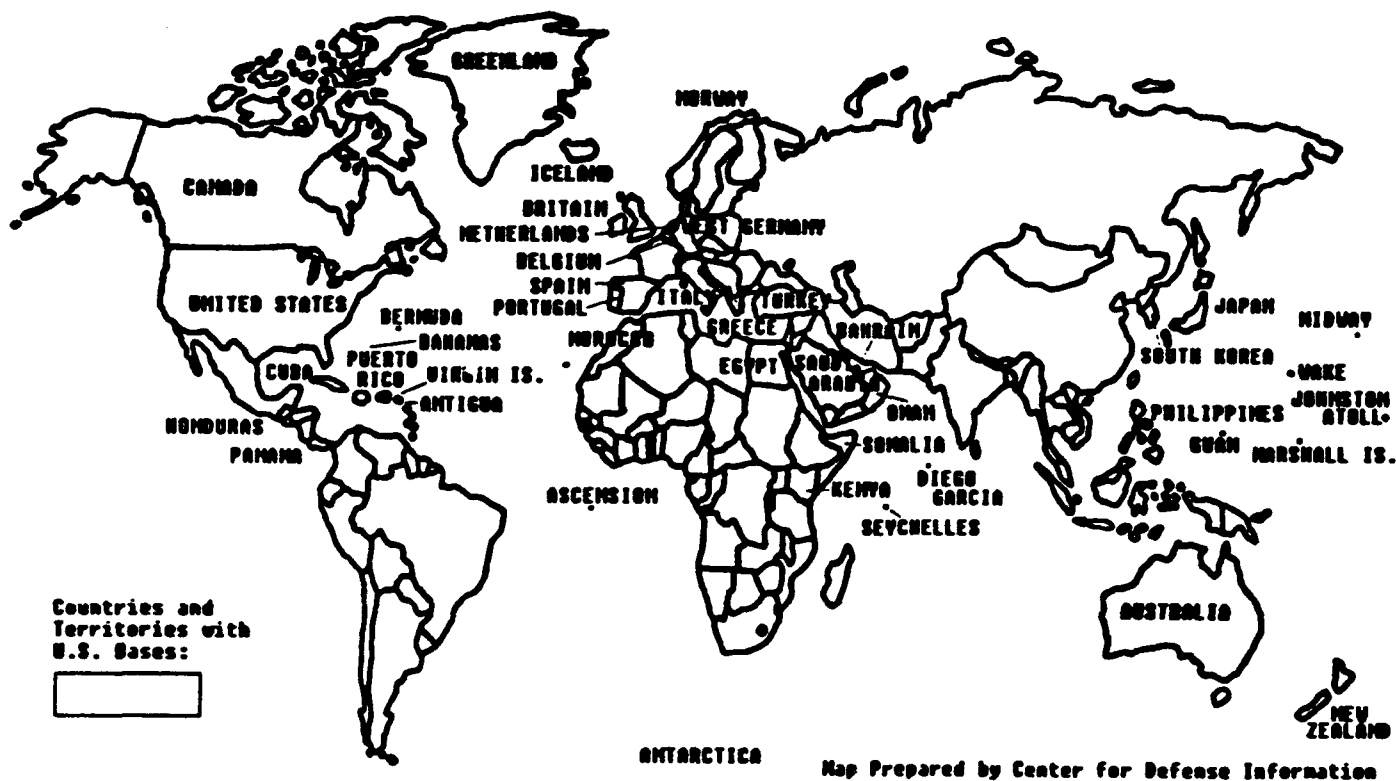


Figure 2. Location of U.S. Military Bases Worldwide

Source: "The Global Network of United States Military Bases." The Defense Monitor, vol. XVIII, no. 2.

CHAPTER III

WINDOW OF VULNERABILITY: A Possible Strategy/Policy Mismatch

Over twenty years ago, President John Kennedy pledged that the United States would "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty." We know now that the scope of that commitment is too broad. . . We know that we are not omnipotent and that we must set priorities. We cannot "pay any price" or "bear any burden." We must discriminate; we must be prudent and careful; we must respond in ways appropriate to the challenge and engage our power only when very important strategic stakes are involved. Not every situation can be salvaged by American exertion even when important values or interests are at stake.

George Shultz, Secretary of State
3 April 1984

The Pressures to Change. For over forty years forward defense has been a keystone in the foundation of U.S. national security strategy despite sporadic opposition. The U.S. warfighting plans for Europe and the Pacific have included sizable forward-deployed forces and overseas bases, while less strategic interests also attracted U.S. presence in a deterrent role. Today, this strategy of forward defense is under greater pressure than ever to be modified, reduced, or even abandoned.

Pressures are building both at home and abroad for withdrawal of American forces from overseas bases and are coming from a wide and diverse range of sources. Among these pressures are: domestic fiscal, domestic discontent with Allied defense burdensharing, nationalistic friction over the basing of U.S. troops on foreign soil, and most noticeably the perceived dramatic change in the international political order initiated by events symbolized by the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. A

statement by President Bush to a group of foreign reporters summed up the variance present, even at the highest levels of government, over the future of forward defense: "I'm not suggesting that forevermore we'll have the same level of troops anywhere. . . Europe, Korea, [or] anywhere else."¹

Nationalistic Pressure. Even the most friendly of our allies are beginning to question their willingness to accept the presence of U.S. military forces on their territory for fear of compromising their own domestic political legitimacy. This trend is even more pronounced in countries of the third world where independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity are paramount. A statement by Philippine Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus, in reference to the eventual conversion of U.S. bases to civilian use, characterizes this sentiment: "The Philippines cannot calibrate its own decisions by the timetables of the superpowers."² Senator William S. Cohen (R-ME), the ranking minority member of the Subcommittee on Projection Forces and Regional Defense summed up the U.S. perspective when he told the annual luncheon of the American Defense Preparedness Association on 19 April 1989, "Our Allies want our support, but not our forces there. They [now] want us just over the horizon."³

Burdensharing Pressure. Over the past decade the sharing of the defense burden has emerged as a powerful political issue. Indeed, it may have always been subject to debate. Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote in a 19 October 1963 issue of the Saturday Evening Post that, "Unless we take definite action, the maintaining of permanent troop establishments abroad will continue to overburden our balance of payments problems and,

most important, discourage the development of the necessary military strength . . . countries should provide for themselves."⁴

Today's arguments sound much the same. Currently, a neo-isolationist pull in Congress is focused mainly on trade legislation; however, it appears a linkage to defense burdensharing exists, which some experts connect to a perceived overreach by the Reagan administration in foreign policy and defense spending.⁵ The standard "ally-bashing" measures are threats to withdraw some of the large numbers of U.S. troops from various locations if the allies do not bear a more proportionate share of the defense burden.

Domestic Fiscal Pressure. At the beginning of 1988, a nonpartisan committee, the Defense Secretary's Commission on Base Realignment and Closure, was created to decide which domestic U.S. bases were no longer necessary and should be closed. In December 1988 the commission recommended closing 86 bases and partially closing five others.⁶ The commission did have the mandate and authority to review overseas bases but did not, citing time constraints to complete their task.

The backlash to their overlook of foreign bases was strong, particularly from a Congress that would more gladly sacrifice foreign bases than facilities in their home constituencies. Senator Alan J. Dixon's (D-Ill.) view was representative:

We currently maintain bases in Korea and Japan, two countries where we run a trade deficit. Why should we support bases there? . . . Further, if communities are going to be asked to undergo significant economic and social upheaval through installation closures and realignments, those communities have a right to expect that our

overseas bases will receive the same scrutiny . . . The commission could have quickly identified overseas bases that could be closed in order to save American taxpayers' money.⁷

New World Order. The desire to concentrate on America's own problems, even at the expense of international obligations and commitments, seems justified by a new wave of relief that the worst of the Cold War is in the past. The American people are thus psychologically prepared for a new relationship with the Soviet Union, and a new world order based on the breakdown of the bi-polar alliances of the post-World War II world. While public opinion remains cautious about such an international outlook, there has been a major shift in mood and opinion.

Given the perceived new strategic situation of a post-Cold War world, the public and policy makers are questioning old truths regarding the deployment and employment of American military power.

Pressure from Military Quarters. There are elements within the Department of Defense that believe we cannot continue to rely on the "forward-deployed" strategy and therefore advocate a shift to a "force-projection strategy." In essence, this means placing primary reliance on projecting military power from the United States, rather than depending on the overseas bases and forward-deployed forces.

The Air Force is one example of a service already hedging their bets on overseas bases and modifying doctrine to reflect the belief that power will be projected from within the U.S. In its White Paper, "Global Reach-Global Power," the Air Force lays out a future where units are more and more likely to be based in

the United States.⁸ Thinking reflects the expectation that airpower will be employed from home.

Many influential strategic thinkers share similar views. For example, General Russell E. Dougherty, who served as Commander in Chief of Strategic Air Command and who now is a member of the Defense Science Board, is convinced that "the key to our future will be our ability to project power without being there."⁹

Strategic Mobility-No Corresponding Change. If the prospect for change in the U.S. strategy of forward defense is almost certain, one would expect a corresponding change in the other component of the overall power projection strategy--strategic mobility forces. So far that has not occurred.

A well-oiled system of rapid deployment has proved elusive despite years of admittedly intermittent effort. Further, the goals of intercontinental mobility have encountered sustained congressional resistance.¹⁰ The reasons are as much philosophical as they are fiscal in nature. A continued neglect of strategic lift is its perceived association with undesirable military intervention in distant places where the U.S. lacks security interests worth fighting for. The late Senator Richard B. Russell opposed McNamara's request for more sealift on the eve of U.S. military intervention in Vietnam on the grounds that "if it is easy for us to go anywhere and do anything, we will always be going somewhere and doing something."¹¹

More contemporary is the question of whether or not to build more mobility assets is partially dependent on the odds that the U.S. will face a protracted war with the Soviets. If

it is perceived that war with the Soviets in Europe is unlikely and the popularly quoted "ten divisions in ten days" reinforcement of NATO is unnecessary, then U.S. policy makers may go all the way back and question whether the U.S. really wants to, or needs to, build more airlift and sealift capacity.

The Window of Vulnerability. In either or both cases, if the strategy of forward defense is abandoned and strategic lift continues to be neglected, then U.S. overseas interests will be subject to increasing risk. Further, any capability to respond to a threat to those interests will be less effective if further deterioration to power projection resources occurs. In the case of forward defense, if overseas bases and accesses are lost, they must be regarded as a permanent loss of those assets. Once forces are withdrawn, the political basis for their return in a possible contingency tends to be eroded. The other disturbing consequence is that future power projection strategy may be determined by external factors and pressures, rather than strategy formulated from careful analysis and a proper match of interests; intent, and capability.

This emerging strategy/policy mismatch, caused by a diverse assortment of pressures, signals the opening of a window of vulnerability whereby the United States may be unable to effectively protect its global interests.

CHAPTER IV

THE CASE FOR FORWARD DEFENSE

Any nation that engages itself in worldwide political commitments without securing permanent worldwide bases is wasting its substance.

George Weller in Bases Overseas

Why Forward Bases. Forward overseas bases are a distinct advantage for a nation like the United States who desires to defend exposed allies and project power far from its shores. They are created to defend a nation's interests--or those of its allies--by providing places from which to project or support the projection of military combat forces forward. These forces can be ground, sea, or air, and the support services available can include maintenance, supply, and stockpiling of the necessary materiel for operations. Bases are also required to train, house, and organize forces prior to commencing operations.

The more forward the base, the more rapid military force can be brought to bear on an enemy, the better vulnerable allies can be protected, and the farther away the enemy can be kept from home territory. Furthermore, the larger the forward base, the bigger and more balanced the combat force it can support, and the wider range of support services it can provide.

Without forward bases, a nation needing to project military power to defend its own or allied interests must rely on air, sea, land, or space platforms projected from its own territory. Endurance and capacity limitations do not make these optimum alternatives to overseas bases in some instances. Overseas bases

for these systems may actually enhance their capabilities.

Historical Support for Forward Bases. The projection of U.S. military power overseas has always required a network of secure refueling, resupply, and maintenance facilities on the fringes of the disputed region--a network which, without exception, has been based on land. The Normandy invasion of 1944 would have been impossible without prior military access to Great Britain; in the Pacific theater, Australia formed the logistical bedrock for MacArthur's re-conquest of the Solomons, New Guinea, and the Philippines. Similarly, U.S. military operations on the Korean peninsula were critically dependent upon access to Japan; and in Vietnam, the United States enjoyed not only a network of installations ashore but also major facilities in the Philippines and Thailand. More recently, the extensive airlift to Israel during the Yom Kippur war was possible only by the access and use of the U.S. base at Lajes Field in the Azores. The bombing strikes on Libya in 1986 were launched from U.S. bases in the United Kingdom and the operations to unseat Manuel Noreiga in Panama were conducted in large part from the U.S. bases in Panama.

Geopolitical Aspect of Forward Defense. The historical rationale for an overseas base network also incorporates a strong geopolitical element. In the case of conventional deterrence, a fundamental national security concern has been that no single power shall dominate the Eurasian landmass. At the end of the Second World War U.S. policy-makers feared that the Soviet Union might use its military forces to conquer, either through intimidation or actual invasion, the weak,

war-torn countries of Western Europe and Asia. It was to "contain" this perceived threat of Soviet expansion that the U.S. established much of its present forward base structure.

In this regard, U.S. planners presumed that the Soviets--or any Eurasian power--worked from a natural geographic advantage in military operations. Any opponent could capitalize on interior lines of communication and deploy and resupply forces over a broad geographic range, while the U.S.--although insulated from direct attack--contended with vast distances and long supply lines. A forward basing network, in conjunction with alliance agreements, was established to alleviate the strains of operating from a continental sanctuary.

The geopolitical logic of maintaining a capability to influence events on the Eurasian landmass, whether in the "heartland" or on the "rimlands," has remained an essential of national security policy since the earliest days of containment. While opinions have varied on the size of the U.S. involvement, the U.S. has never doubted the logic behind such a commitment.

· · Modern Operational Advantages: A strategy of forward defense, along with its network of bases and deployed forces serve several functions in the framework of overall U.S. national security strategy:

- *Bases are essential to the creation of regional power balances which deter aggression and promote overall regional stability. They are a kind of warning, a political reminder to an enemy against strategic aggression, and a memorandum of commitment to allies and support for the common defense.

- *Forward deployed forces assist in protecting the growing

strategic and economic interests of weaker allies, allowing them to mature and thereby contribute to a more stable world.

*Bases allow U.S. forces to reduce their response time in meeting regional threats. They can be armed for conflict in short order, while they are defensive in nature by their location. The credibility of forces deployed may be enough to possibly deter aggression.

*Forward defense enables the U.S. to implement its defense strategy in a more cost-effective manner. Forward basing promotes efficient use of limited resources; for example, by taking advantage of existing base facilities, we reduce airlift and sealift requirements to transport forces from the CONUS.

*Forward-deployed forces are immersed in their potential area of operations and are intimately familiar with the local factors that may influence a conflict. Commanders, as well as troops, become familiar with factors ranging from terrain and local culture to the politics and economics of the region. Forces train and exercise in areas where they would most likely fight. Advantage may be gained by military involvement in local civil action programs when more strenuous activity is unneeded.

The Cost Factor. A worldwide network of bases represents an attempt to reduce the costs of defense in time of peace by making the bases as independent as possible before the conflict. This is the advantage of prepositioning stores of personnel, food, weapons, and materiel in locations where their benefit will be greatest when war begins. A network also reduces the costs of losses and distribution.

The economy associated with forward defense is explained by the economic law of diminishing efficiency. Simply stated, it is where the weapons are, not only how many there are, that determines their value. During World War II, the logistician's expression of this law was a geometrical progression. Difficulty of supply increases with the square of distance from the main supply reservoir to the theatre of operations.¹ This law of diminishing efficiency applies to all aspects of military power in all times and with all weapons.

The forward base, then, is not only a deterrent to conflict but a shortening factor in the length of a war. The overseas base meets the need for a cheaper economy of defense, in addition to giving the side that possesses it the advantage of powerful geographical position.

The U.S. has, on several occasions during the last forty years, attempted to challenge the economy of forward defense and the theory behind diminishing efficiency by shifting away from forward defense to a strategy based on "strike" forces located in the CONUS.² These strike forces would be able to respond rapidly to a crisis anywhere in the world by means of strategic airlift and sealift.

But, experience makes clear that strategic mobility is expensive. Planners came to the conclusion that a strategy relying on forward deployed forces, backed up by a rapid reinforcement capability, was the most cost-effective approach to deter war, or prevail should deterrence fail.³ Accordingly, U.S. security strategy has consistently maintained a balance of mobility, prepositioning, and forward defense.

CHAPTER V

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR FORWARD DEFENSE

We are a superpower, and we're always going to want to have the capacity to deploy military force to safeguard American interests and preserve our capacity to influence events in the world.

Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney

Given the vulnerability of the forward defense strategy and its supporting network of overseas bases to an assortment of domestic and international pressures, what are the implications and options for the United States?

Reduction of U.S. Commitment Abroad. The most drastic way for the U.S. to reduce its dependence on overseas bases would be to decrease its foreign commitments. There are precedents for this in the records of the former colonial powers of Europe after World War II. But, as President Reagan, echoing all of his postwar predecessors, pointed out to Congress in his second report on national security strategy:

While there may be room for adjustments at the margins in our contributions to regional security, none of our current commitments are plausible candidates for major reduction, given the scope of our global interests, the threats to those interests, and the increasingly interdependent nature of free world political, economic, and security relationships.¹

There seems little likelihood that the Bush administration will take a different stand, even when the question of how much capability to deploy abroad is unsettled.

The Reassessment Process-New Directions. There are signs the American government is beginning a reassessment process of its forward defense system. As Secretary of Defense Frank

Carlucci stated in his 1989 Report to the Congress:

Access provided to various bases by our allies and friends contributes significantly to collective defense efforts. Not only does it enable crucial supplies to be prepositioned, but it provides critical stopover points for our forces en route to a contingency and is an essential element of our forward-basing strategy . . . No base, however, is irreplaceable, and where necessary, we will seek alternatives that continue to support our common defense objectives.²

The beginning of any reassessment process must begin with the philosophy and logic behind any strategy. In the case of forward defense, the techniques the U.S. applied in establishing a worldwide plan of bases revolve around ideas defined by the author George Weller in his book, Bases Overseas. Weller describes the "centrifugal" and "centripetal" systems, labeling the United States a "centrifugist-becoming-centripetal" power. centripetal" power. He explains the purpose of a centrifugal system is to hold off a potential enemy by a barrier, like the Maginot Line or the Great Wall; while a centripetal system surrounds or "contains" a potential enemy.³

In either case, an enemy is clearly implied and for the U.S. in the postwar era it was understood to be the Soviet Union. With the likelihood the Soviet threat will continue to diminish, based on recent trends, it is probable that identifying the enemy will become increasingly difficult. The world will continue to discard the familiar bipolar system, where other states gravitate to those poles, and become a world of power centers where states free-float in their commitments. For those reasons, protecting and defending specific U.S. interests must become the focus of forward defense, rather than arraying forces against a particular opponent.

To further reorient forward defense strategy to the new strategic environment, it must be the policy of the U.S. to retain facilities as long as possible, and phase any loss of facilities in such a way as to provide the necessary time to develop alternatives to U.S. global deployments. The U.S. can utilize its still considerable political, military, and economic tools to maintain its overseas base structure in rudimentary operational effectiveness. This may involve increased payments to host countries and penalties of constrained operational and administrative flexibility in our use of these bases.

To meet these basic conditions it will be necessary to counter the perception at home and abroad that relaxation of tensions has eliminated the need for a U.S. military presence overseas. Unless policy makers are convinced that a real threat remains and is best protected and defended by the continuation of forward defense, this temporary solution will be forfeited.

Should pullbacks occur, the next task is preserving those bases and facilities that the U.S. considers most vital. For this, one of the most important facts about the basing structure, and one possibly overlooked when considering specific countries and facilities, concerns the relationships among the various overseas base complexes.

Strategic and political considerations knit close ties between all U.S. basing facilities abroad. The negotiations over one base become closely linked to negotiations on another. For example, the renegotiation of the U.S. agreement with Spain in the early 1980s influenced later U.S.-Philippine talks.⁴ There was evidence that President Marcos looked to the Spanish

accord as something of a prototype for his own negotiations for renewal of the U.S.-Philippine basing agreements.

Even facilities that have lost their original military significance cannot be given up without affecting the geopolitical environment developed over the past several decades. Any U.S. withdrawal from established bases would be interpreted as a more general U.S. retrenchment from the country or region involved.

The military value of a location, as well as the value to the military, must also be factored. Although the future of U.S. bases in the Philippines remains in question, they illustrate the dual advantages of such locations. First, Subic Bay is the most conveniently located naval-air base in the world. It remains one of the ageless geopolitical locations in that part of the world whereby events in key locations can be influenced by forces operating from its airfields and harbor. When also considering the value to the military, the loss of that complex could never be completely compensated by facilities in any Pacific/Indian Ocean location. Indeed, without Subic Bay the U.S. Seventh Fleet could not possibly be maintained at its present force level and operational effectiveness.⁵ In addition, the cost of constructing new base complexes promises to be prohibitive, especially in an era of constricting defense budgets and growing public skepticism over the value of overseas strong points and the commitments implied by them.

To preserve vital locations, access to foreign bases can not be regarded as a uniquely military problem. It should be

viewed as part of a larger national strategy and thus involve all elements of the U.S. government. Additional incentives beyond common defense objectives can influence a foreign country to consider new or continued U.S. basing on their land. On a case-by-case basis, attractive "packages" for basing agreements must continue to involve the offices of OSD (foreign military sales), State (aids or grants), Energy, Commerce, and so on until reasonable agreements are reached.

It might also be advantageous to restructure our overseas bases in order to make more use of islands or "rocks" that do not have the same political sensitivity as do installations located on a host country's mainland. For instance, in the Mediterranean the U.S. could focus on installations on Spanish, Italian, and Greek islands that may be less sensitive to the political trends of the mainlands. Crete is a perfect example.

Technological advances in a number of areas offer a "new direction" to address the issue of access to "fixed" land bases. For example; the U.S. now possesses the technology to construct huge floating concrete platforms capable of operating in open seas and has relied on the afloat prepositioning of military supplies for some time.⁶ Yet, is there really a difference between military presence based on an artificially constructed installation rather than on land? The issue does not revolve on the question whether a basing facility is "natural" or "artificial", but rather whether U.S. presence is accepted in the region. This does not imply we have not benefited from afloat prepositioning or there is no value in new technologies. It does suggest that it would be self-deluding for the U.S. to

assert that its presence does not require the same basic acceptance of presence by the host country.

The U.S. may also need to consider innovative ideas once considered unthinkable. Important change could be instituted at U.S. overseas bases to decrease their perceived or actual American nature while cementing mutual defense interests. For example, an allied instead of a U.S. flag could fly over the base; or foreign navies, air forces, or civil aviation and shipping could share it. These "local partner" arrangements could have positive benefits from a burdensharing perspective: local support to American forces could be improved, releasing U.S. personnel and lowering the U.S. profile while reducing Congressional calls for unilateral pull-backs.

Another innovation uses a combination of basing options to provide the U.S. with basic logistical support networks. A mix of affordable allied contract/lease operations, would encourage U.S. planners to consolidate and trim requirements and include storage facilities, repair services, refueling, and/or space for training. The assistance could be provided through government-to-government agreements, or by leasing and/or contracting out for services such as is done on a commercial basis. The actual basing of U.S. military units would be minimal. Regional military information centers, set-up by the JCS and regional CINCs, would monitor the local arrangements in each area. Their data bank would also include the entire scope of the facilities and resources available in a particular location.

No Substitute. This reassessment presupposes that there is no substitute for the presence of forces and their supporting bases, should hostilities occur. Once forces are withdrawn, the political basis for their return tends to be eroded and their recommitment in a conflict would be a risky undertaking via bases and logistics lines subject to political denial, not to mention enemy attack. Whatever choices are made over the future of forward defense, the overarching theme must be that in the deterrence of conflict, there is no real substitute for visible presence in force and on the scene.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Forward defense strategy and the extensive overseas base network has served the U.S. well and should not be abandoned because of perceived change in the international and domestic environments. However, the United States must reevaluate this long held strategy to reflect the reality of limited resources and the changing threat to American interests while retaining an active role as the only true global power. If policy makers do not take the time to more precisely match capability with intentions to formulate strategy, then it will be imposed on them by a variety of domestic and international pressures that may place American overseas interests in increasing danger.

The "new directions" proposed for forward defense--reassertions of important old ideas with new innovations--are incomplete and need refinement. Yet, they stress the importance, versatility, and economy of an overseas network of bases. They are also a philosophical framework from which to make policy decisions. Further, the "directions" do not address any of the specifics and intricacies of particular basing agreements or individual countries.

In sum, the importance of power projection strategy to protect and defend global interests is clear. The U.S. should prevent the further erosion of its components and the military and political consequences of such a loss. Hopefully, some combination of all available options will permit the U.S. to

renew the commitment to a robust strategy of power projection to protect and defend areas critical to U.S. strategic, political, and economic interests. To assume otherwise is to project a demise of the U.S. as a world power and, conceivably, as a viable national entity.

NOTES

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None.

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4. Alvin J. Cottrell & Thomas H. Moorer, "U.S. Overseas Bases: Problems of Projecting American Military Power Abroad," The Washington Papers: #47 (Washington: The Center for Strategic & International Studies), p. 55.

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